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1957

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NEW YORK JOURNAL-AMERICAN
NEW YORK DAILY NEWS
NEW YORK POST
NEW YORK MIRROR
NEW YORK WORLD TELEGRAM & THE SUN
NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE
NEW YORK TIMES

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"Hotel Paradiso"

Journal-American

April 12, 1957

Lahr Star Guest At 'Hotel Paradiso'

By JOHN McCLAIN

IF YOU ARE a Bert Lahr fan, as I happen to be, you will have a good time at "Hotel Paradiso," a farce to end all farces, which opened last night at the Henry Miller Theatre. For this adaptation of a mad French bedroom frolic, transposed and directed by Peter Glenville, is an almost unbelievable melange of every old and new gimmick in the history of the slapstick industry. It is a field day for Lahr.

Doors open and shut, four at a clip, everybody's identity is mistaken, a woman disguises herself under a man's top hat, a man hides in a chimney and emerges in black-face, there is even a French version of the Keystone Cops on hand. And, believe it or not, a character drills a hole through a wall with an auger and impales Mr. Lahr who is languishing on the other side. All the stops are pulled out for the whole evening, and most of the time it is fine fun.

The authors have woven their crazy quilt around seven principal players: Lahr, weary of his homely wife, arranges a rendezvous with the beautiful bride of his best friend when the latter leaves on a business trip; the friend's nephew has become involved with Lahr's maid; another acquaintance (with four daughters) drops in for a visit. For one reason or another they all wind up in the Hotel Paradiso. The remainder of the evening is occupied with people running up and down stairs and in and out of rooms in an effort to avoid one another.

Second Act-itis

It seemed to me that everything got off to a wonderful start and then suffered a mild attack of Second Act-itis. The proceedings slow down perceptibly, and for lack of solid situations fall back on a series of disconnected bits, climaxed by the man with the drill. Even so, it must be agreed that Lahr is usually able to make even the most ancient routine come to life, and certainly the timing is perfection. Never before have so many doors been opened and slammed with such precision.

The third act picks up again, and though it has now become sheer Mack Sennett, the hilarity holds to the finish.

Angela Lansbury, making her bow to Broadway, proves to be a statuesque and highly becoming performer with a fine sense of comedy; John Emery, a skilled hand at everything from Shakespeare to Saroyan, comes through hilariously in the role of the best friend.

Every Assist

Vera Pearce, as Lahr's wife, has some of the show's best moments, and Douglas Byng, who was a member of the original British cast, is extremely capable in the amusing role of the lawyer with the exaggerated stammer.

Other bright contributions are credited to Carleton Carpenter, Sandra Lee and Ronald Radd.

The producers have given the show every assist. The curtain goes up on a brilliant asbestos drop revealing the whimsical advertising posters of the period, the work of Osbert Lancaster, who also did the sets and costumes. These, too, are in extremely ingenious good humor.

Peter Glenville has done a masterful job of maintaining the pace and engineering the myriad split-second entrances and exits.

This is easily the whackiest scrimmage in several seasons and in spite of some dry segments I believe Lahr & Co. can bring it in a winner.

"HOTEL PARADISO"

Farce in three acts by Georges Feydeau and Maurice Desvallieres, adapted and staged by Peter Glenville; settings and costumes by Osbert Lancaster; supervised by Charles Lisanby and produced by arrangement with Hardy W. Smith and H. M. Tennent Ltd.; associate producer Will Lester Productions; presented by Richard Myers, Julius Fleischman, Charles Bowden, Richard Barr and H. Ridgely Bullock, Jr., at Henry Miller's Theatre, April 11, 1957. The cast:

Boniface.....Bert Lahr
Angelique.....Vera Pearce
Marcelle.....Angela Lansbury
Cot.....John Emery
Maxime....Carleton Carpenter
Victoire.....Sondra Lee
Martin.....Douglas Byng
1st Porter.....Neil Laurence
2nd Porter.....Mark Lang
3rd Porter.....Fred Baker
4th Porter.....Roy Johnson
Violette.....John-Ellen Caine
Marguerite.....Nancy Devlin
Paquerette.....Patricia Fay
Pervenche.....Helen Quarter
Anniello.....Ronald Radd
Georges.....James Bernard
A Lady.....Lucille Benson
A Duke.....Horace Cooper
Tabu.....James Coco
Police Inspector..George Tyne

DAILY NEWS

April 12, 1957

'Hotel Paradiso' Happy Farce With Vera Pearce, Bert Lahr

By JOHN CHAPMAN

One of the few heartening things about the theatre is that we are rediscovering the innocent joys of sex farce and have found some actors and directors who can put it on with extravagant humor. "Hotel Paradiso," which opened last evening at Henry Miller's, is a spring daffydil. Under the bang-bang direction of Peter Glenville and with a cast headed by Bert Lahr, Vera Pearce and Angela Lansbury, this is one of the funniest comedies since the silent movies—and the silent film farces were the funniest.

"Hotel Paradiso" is Glenville's adaptation of a French trifle written by the late Georges Feydeau 71 years ago. The plot has been stirred up from standard ingredients: A harried man wed to a domineering wife. Another man married to a pretty wife. A secret rendezvous between one husband and the other wife at a hotel of admirable ill fame. As designed with great wit and lovely style by Osbert Lancaster, this hotel has enough doors and stairs to keep a big and delightful cast scampering all evening long.

A Happy Fraud

French farce never set out to be dirty. It simply pretended to be enormously wicked, and audiences joyfully went along with this pretense and were just as great frauds as the actors were. Last evening's opening of "Hotel Paradiso" was one of those rare and happy occasions when actors and audience met on the common ground of innocent debauchery.

Nobody would truly believe, for example, that Bert Lahr is a philanderer. He just isn't the type. So when he does go philandering it is a funny notion. When he says to his lady-love, "I want you," he is deliciously

amusing because he is so badly fitted to the line. This Lahr is not the baggy-pants burlesquer of the musical shows; he is a skilled player of parlor farce.

Mack Sennett Speed

For another example, nobody would truly believe that a wife could be as physically big and as domineering as Vera Pearce is outside the comic strips — but here she is, twice as large and the mostly completely comic performance of the evening.

It would be difficult to find a more alluring and straight-faced comedienne than Angela Lansbury to tempt the erring Lahr. As she has been costumed by Lancaster, she is pure Charles Dana Gibson, and it is a joy to watch her throw a fit or a faint.

There are many other excellent performances, and they all fit the pace of Glenville's fast Mack Sennett direction. John Emery as Miss Lansbury's pompous husband, Douglas Byng as a lawyer who goes into paroxysms of stammering whenever there is a thunderstorm, Sondra Lee as a saucy French maid and several others contribute to all the happy exaggerations of "Hotel Paradiso."

At the first performance Lahr made one of the most charming curtain speeches I ever heard—and it was when the curtain first went up. His friends in the audience gave him great welcoming applause. He came downstage in a crouch, motioned for silence and growled "Later!" All right, Bert. It's later now. Here's my applause—for you and Glenville and all your playmates.

New York Post

April 12, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

A Wild Night in a Paris Hotel

"Hotel Paradiso" is said to be almost the grandfather of French farces, and it wisely declines to try concealing its years. Indeed, Peter Glenville's adaptation of this vintage antic, which opened last night at Henry Miller's Theater, makes a virtue of its healthy antiquity and presents it proudly as a jovial period piece, filled with comic alarms and excursions and cheerfully bent on kidding itself as well as the honorable institution of sex. With the superb Bert Lahr leading its unabashed buffoonery, it manages to stir up a considerable amount of hilarity.

To describe the sort of clowning "Hotel Paradiso" is up to, it is probably advisable to recall what was recently done with Thornton Wilder's "The Matchmaker." In much the same fashion, it moves along loudly and rapidly, hurling slapstick and physical gags to left and right, never taking itself seriously, relishing its own knockabout humor, and always remembering that the whole thing is intended to be absurd. It has a bit of trouble getting started and its fun is inclined to come by fits and starts, but it has the blessing of improving as it goes along.

As for its story, it may be described as one of those farces about infidelity in which the central characters are so busy dashing about and hiding from one another that they haven't any time left for their proposed dalliance. The first act is concerned with getting them into a shabby hotel called the Paradiso, the second shows them darting ingloriously through its dubious portals, and the third gets them straightened out. There is a futile philanderer, his dragon of a wife, a handsome girl and her unappreciative husband, and a fellow who stutters when it rains.

It is the sort of play that has to catch the proper farcical mood and keep it spinning through the air constantly if it isn't to fall on its face, and last night I thought it had quite a problem swinging into action. As a matter of fact, it wasn't until the second act, when a hotel page started boring a hole through Mr. Lahr's posterior, that matters began to pick up properly, but, from then on, the gaiety continued to increase and it happily remained that way until the end. "Hotel Paradiso" is a case where the pace and the noise are everything.

Bert Lahr

Mr. Lahr is, as everyone knows, one of the funniest men in the world, and he is enormously entertaining as the futile philanderer. This is the role that Alec Guinness played in London, and Mr. Guinness achieved a sort of Chaplinesque wistfulness which Mr. Lahr doesn't even try for. I think the early sections of the farce suffer a little from its absence, but it seems terribly ungrateful to say so, because the current performance is wonderfully hilarious and immensely likable. The Lahr comic genius soon makes itself felt, and there is no resisting it.

There are a number of other excellent performances. Angela Lansbury reveals surprising humorous gusto as the lady whose seduction is attempted, and Vera Pearce is excellent as the termagent wife. John Emery is just right as the unappreciative husband who comes to believe in ghosts, and Douglas Byng, who had the same part in the London production, is genuinely comic as the occasionally-stuttering gentleman. The sets and costumes by Osbert Lancaster are of immense help. Without being any masterpiece of farcical clowning, "Hotel Paradiso" is an agreeable frolic.

Daily Mirror

April 12, 1957

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Hotel Paradiso' Just Loaded With Laughs

• Bert Lahr whacks out rib-tickling homers like Mantle on rampage.

Myers, Fleischmann, Bowden, Barr & Bullock—sounds like a high-powered law firm, doesn't it?—raised the roof off Henry Miller's Theatre on Thursday evening with an explosively funny farce called "Hotel Paradiso." Georges Feydeau and Maurice Desvallieres penned this papa of the bedroom romp back in 1886.

Originally titled "L'Hotel du Libre Exchange," the venerable frolic has become something of a French dramatic milestone. It represents the well-made play formula equipped with a slapstick. It has since sired such sexy American carnivals as "Getting Gertie's Garter," "Up in Mabel's Room" and "Ladies' Night in a Turkish Bath."

THE VERSATILE PETER Glenville adapted and staged the jape in London last season with Alec Guinnes as the star. It's still wrecking the ribs of staid Britishers. Judging by the reaction of the first-nighters here, the New York replica should be putting stitches in the sides of local customers for quite a spell, too.

Hotel Paradiso is one of those flea bags where a guy and a doll can register for a night, with or without baggage. To its tawdry parlors come a Milquetoast and the neglected and vengeful wife of his best friend, the lady's husband tracking down poltergeists for the city fathers, a visiting provincial and his four daughters, a stuffy student and a maid who's willing to teach him a thing or two.

These ill-assorted guests discover that you don't get the same accommodations for 20 francs a night that are available at higher-priced hostelries. And the police don't raid the latter, either. So much for the plot. It doesn't really matter. It's not what's done that's important—it's how it's done. And, believe us, you haven't seen such expert chuckle-provoking in a long time.

The one and only Bert Lahr whacked out laugh-homers, like Mickey Mantle on a rampage, as the pint-sized, hen-pecked builder married to a monstrous dragon of a woman. You haven't heard such howls in years as rocked the Miller's rafters when our Bert, backed up against a hotel-room door, felt the bite of a bit whirled by a perplexed bellboy bent on boring a peephole. It was a masterpiece of pantomime.

• • •

VERA PEARCE, as Bert's overbearing ogre of a spouse; Angela Lansbury, as his attractive, blonde bombshell of a companion; John Emery, as the misunderstood adventuress's husband; and Douglas Byng, as an innocent bore caught in a cataclysm of chicanery, are terrific. Byng, particularly, panicked the ticket-holders, as the simpleton who began to stutter when it rained.

Carleton Carpenter, Sondra Lee, Ronald Radd, James Bernard, Lucille Benson and Horace Cooper offered other contributions that defied you to keep a straight face. Cooper, a facile farceur, had little to do, but did it perfectly. As a Duke, boiled to the gills, he achieved one of the most hilarious moments of the evening with a few observant phrases and a wonderfully expressive pan.

Osbert Lancaster has designed settings and costumes that enhance the wacky ways of this unabashed, tongue-in-cheek, stylized satire on what grandpere (grandpa to you) used to consider the height of saucy sophistication.

"Hotel Paradiso," in sum, is at once effective farce in its own right, and a pointed commentary on its genre. Art? Heck, no! Riotous burlesque? Positively! Yaks? Loaded with 'em. Offbeat? Real crazy, man, real crazy. Come to think of it, there's a lot of art in being real gone!

The New York Times
April 12, 1957

The Theatre: Bert Lahr Stars in Farce

Plays Errant Husband in 'Hotel Paradiso'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

ALTHOUGH "Hotel Paradiso" was written in 1886, there is life in the old farce yet. To judge by the performance at Henry Miller's last evening, not quite so much life as there may have been originally. In the last act, the bedlam does not yield as much uproar as it does when the curtain first rises on Bert Lahr and the harum-scarum antic Georges Feydeau and Maurice Desvallieres wrote.

But one should not quibble. For Peter Glenville's comic-book production of "Hotel Paradiso," with its broad style and old-fashioned fantastification, is enormously amusing in a vein of sheer theatre. And Mr. Lahr has not had such a fat part since his great days on the musical stage.

•

To say that he is cast as an errant French husband caught in an assignation with his best friend's wife is to convey nothing pertinent. Feydeau and his collaborator were not writing comedy. In "Hotel Paradiso" they were writing a Marx Brothers cartoon in which doors are slammed and identities are jumbled and one desperate crisis leads to another. Despite the profligacies of the plot, there is a kind of good-natured innocence about the whole prank. It has no more reality than a burlesque sketch.

Last autumn Mr. Glenville gave us a superb example of his serious method in his neat direction of "Separate Tables." It is extraordinary to find the same man doing an equally distinguished job on a farce from the old school. It begins with one of those obsolete curtains that display advertisements—this time in French. The settings and costumes by Osbert Lancaster are both entertaining and reminiscent, and there are footlights, as well as a tin-pan orchestra that plays brassy music.

But Mr. Glenville's re-creation of old theatre is not precious or patronizing. His actors plunge head-first into a slam-bang performance that goes at high speed, like the silent movies of very many years ago. The first act arranges the assignation. The second act concludes with a police raid on a disorderly hotel in which, according to the method of farce, the guests are only too well-known to each other. In the third act the authors obligingly solve all the crises and let the audience go happily into the night.

•

Beginning with Mr. Lahr, who looks comic before he speaks a line, the acting is wildly funny. Vera Pearce, who is like a Rowlandson drawing of a beldame; Angela Lansbury, as a high-strung wife who is forever throwing her arms in the air; Sondra Lee, the insane Tiger Lily of "Peter Pan," who is now a wicked French maid with big eyes and rapid feet; Douglas Byng, as a French barrister who stutters in damp weather but speaks like an express-train on fine days; John Emery as a pompous, slow-witted husband; Carleton Carpenter as a thin, dapper, silly student; Ronald Radd as the sin-drenched manager of a hotel of ill-repute—are all vastly amusing.

But Mr. Lahr sets the tone of the skulduggery in an expert low comedy performance. He is always a worried-looking man with his creased face, his small eyes set close together, his clown's mouth and his big nose. God must have laughed when he invented Mr. Lahr.

•

Not that Mr. Lahr hasn't been working at the craft of comedy all these years. As Boniface, the wretched philanderer, he devotes a lot of stage craftsmanship to producing laughs from the audience. He is acting when he is racing and bellowing, but he is also acting when he is standing still and listening—tense with nervous apprehension. Always, the working fool.

"Hotel Paradiso" as a sketch does not quite keep pace with him. The follies of the script begin to falter before he does. But let's not quibble. For Mr. Glenville's conception of this rumpus is riotous, and the execution by the actors is bold, reckless and funny. Mr. Lahr is in very rare form.

New York World-Telegram
and
The Sun
April 12, 1957

Lahr Hops Into Classic Bedlam

By TOM DONNELLY.

"Hotel Paradiso" (at Henry Miller Theater) is an animated comic strip, furiously funny and illuminated by a primitive radiance that I found altogether irresistible.

Peter Glenville adapted and directed this antique farce by Georges Feydeau and Maurice Desavallieres, and he has done a masterful job. Bedlam has never been more harmoniously organized.

It is the business of the play to get a great many people into a sinister hostelry, several of them for illicit purposes, to churn them about in outrage and confusion, and then to get them out again and bring them face to face with the dreadful consequences of their folly.

All Ingredients.

"Hotel Paradiso" has all the classic ingredients: a neglected wife dead set on achieving error; a husband vilely determined to seduce the mate of his best friend, and feeling fully justified in pursuing this unsavory course because his own legal partner is a lady of marvelously repellant aspect; a saucy maid resolved to acquaint a young intellectual with the facts of amour, etc., etc.

Doors fly open, and culprits are embarrassingly surprised. All is discovered, and then concealed, and then discovered again.

Ambitious Seducer.

The performance is brilliant: gestures of surpassing broadness timed with minute precision. Bert Lahr is the ambitious seducer, and he is in glorious form. "I want you!" Mr. Lahr croons to his target for tonight, and the simple phrase takes on the rich majesty of a symphony in lust and lunacy. There is a moment when Mr. Lahr, complaining of not feeling well, leans against a wall. In the corridor outside, a hotel attendant, a novice Peeping Tom, proceeds to drill a hole through the partition. The sharp metal point connects with Mr. Lahr. Expressions of the most exquisite sensibility race chaotically across his countenance, which is sufficiently tangled in repose. In baffled anguish Mr. Lahr is forced, on the grounds of probability, to doubt his own utterance that he feels exactly as if he were having a hole drilled in the base of his spine. Laugh? I thought I'd split my sides, as the old saying goes.

An Astonishing 'S.'

Angela Lansbury, making her Broadway debut as the object of Mr. Lahr's wayward affections, is astonishingly expert. Miss Lansbury contorts her body into a superb approximation of the letter "S," and moves this unlikely silhouette across the stage with marvelous dexterity, hurling frenzied asides at the audience the while, and latching on to nefarious schemes with such electric vehemence that one can fairly hear her brain click. Vera Pearce, as Mr. Lahr's wife, is the last word on why men leave home: "En garde!" she shouts, attacking her spouse with a hat pin.

Douglas Byng contributes mightily to the success of the evening as a gentleman who stutters only when it rains, and so mangles words that he always seems to be on the verge of extreme indelicacy. Sondra Lee and Carleton Carpenter are also most helpful, and only John Emery, as an almost-betrayed husband, bears down with a heavy hand.

"Hotel Paradiso" has its lags and lapses, but it would be churlish to dwell upon them, in view of the general splendor of the occasion. Osbert Lancaster's garish settings are fine works of bad art.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune
April 12, 1957

THEATER

'Hotel Paradiso'

By WALTER KERR

THE PROBLEM posed by "Hotel Paradiso" at the Henry Miller is not one of esthetics but of mathematics: if A slams 20 doors, B runs up and down a winding staircase 16 times, and C drills a hole through a wall right into D's exposed backside, how does Bert Lahr get into blackface?

I'm serious. This is one for Euclid, who may have looked on beauty bare but hasn't really seen anything yet. Georges Feydeau, who is popularly rumored to have originated what is now called "French farce" and who ran this one up in collaboration with Maurice Desvallieres in 1886, was interested exclusively in permutations and combinations.

• • •

Suppose a beagle-type fellow had a chance to slip down a rope-ladder and off into the night with the ample and fairly ardent wife of his closest friend? Suppose the aforesaid friend were to turn up at the same local spa, intent on ridding it of its reputation for being haunted? Suppose four shrieking tots in Mary Pickford curls were to exchange their ermine muffs for vast white nightgowns and go shrilly through the halls waving night-lights? Suppose chairs broke down when you sat on them? How many bones would survive the evening unbroken, how many voices win the race with laryngitis, how many laughs would you get?

• • •

Well, you'd get a lot. "Hotel Paradiso," with its gaslit footlights winking at you and a hearty brass band bellowing it on its way, is persistently funny in a quaint, detached, and—I hate to say it—charming sort of way. After all, that's Bert Lahr up there, clasping his fluttering fingers over a bright blue vest and snorting that deep down inside him he is "seething with molten lava," carefully shifting a cigar to the side of his mouth before kissing a lady, shouting "Treachery! Double-dyed treachery!" at every opportunity, and clutching the side walls of the handsome Osbert Lancaster set as a hand-drill penetrates his spine. (In case you've ever wondered what it might be like to be transfixed to a door-jamb, you'll know now: every shade of terror, mortification, ecstasy, and refined paralysis is exhaustively limned on the grave Lahr puss. Rembrandt never did a better job.)

• • •

Mr. Lahr hurls women to the floor in animal passion, tosses off a bit of a tango as he trips through a lobby, hides delicately and inadequately behind a palm-frond—and each majestic or cowardly attitude is a joy to behold. He is also well surrounded. Vera Pearce, as his wife, looks and sounds like the Duchess in "Alice in Wonderland," cries out a terrifying "en garde!" with a hatpin for a rapier, and is a superior termagant at every roaring turn.

Angela Lansbury, ravishing in that flat-top hair-do that made the Gibson Girl glorious, sweeps on (and off, a thousand times) in yards and yards of fluffy pink, dives at an enemy like a cat caught in a windmill, and generally demonstrates that she is a very crisp chick with a snappish line. Douglas Byng stammers splendidly (but only during thunderstorms, and don't ask me to explain anything more), John Emery shouts epithets in a voice like a drunken gramophone, Carleton Carpenter weaves a spidery, blonde-banged course through the tumbling bric-a-brac, and even Horace Cooper—with exactly three words to say—makes a zombie to remember. There isn't a sluggish clown on the premises.

• • •

Is there anything else to be said of "Hotel Paradiso"? Yes. It is, as the dice keep being thrown again and again, just a wee bit tiresome. The authors have bequeathed director Peter Glenville nothing but a jungle-gym to work out on: no homey traces of character, no lifelike sofa to rest on, no pause that refreshes. The result is a methodical madness that whirls you through the revolving door as often as you want to go—and possibly one time more.

But unless you have an absolute aversion to the school of papier-mache farce that "The Matchmaker" first brought back to us, I'd take a chance. Mr. Lahr looks so happy when he thinks his wife has been kidnaped. You may want to share that bliss.

"Hide and Seek"

DAILY NEWS
April 3, 1957

'Hide and Seek' Asks, 'Who's Got The Egg?' The Play Itself Has It

By JOHN CHAPMAN

A small few of our country's educators have expressed the fear that the current passion for science and the exclusion of the gentler arts in our schools, colleges and universities will turn us into a nation of dopes. I can recommend last night's new play, "Hide and Seek," to these few educators, but to no others. This is a case of nuclear physics disintegrating drama.

The play, by Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall, was presented by F. F. Finklehoffe, Mark Marvin and Gabriel Katzka at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, and was directed by Reginald Denham.

The story, set somewhere in Warwick, England, concerns a passel of scientists and a hot boy with a hot egg. The scientists have doped up a new way of destroying life by deforming it; they have cooked up some radioactive chicken eggs which will hatch misshapen monsters.

These scientists think a small boy has filched one of these eggs and is now carrying it around to hatch it in the bathtub and with a hot water bottle. Since the egg, besides being dangerous, is top secret, the boy becomes likewise and the grownups all have fits when the lad disappears with his hellish henfruit.

All a Mistake

Several nice actors become involved in this egghunt—Geraldine Fitzgerald as the lad's mother, Barry Morse as her scientific husband, Basil Rathbone as the mastermind of the most godawful enterprise since the project at Los Alamos and Peter Lazer as the boy.

It turns out that the lad hasn't got this egg at all. What he has is a sample which he has filched from an incubator, and it finally hatches into a beautiful, normal chick. If there is any philosophy behind "Hide and Seek," it must be that science has not yet been able to destroy the symbol of life—the egg.

The egg also is—and this shows how unscientific the stage really is—the symbol of death in the theatre. As an always-expectant first-nighter, I'd hoped that "Hide and Seek" would be a click. But it's a cluck.

"HIDE AND SEEK"

Play in three acts by Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall; staged by Reginald Denham; setting and lighting by Ralph Alswang; costumes by Virginia Volland; presented by Fred F. Finklehoffe, Mark Marvin and Gabriel Katzka at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre, April 2, 1957.

The cast:

Saul.....Peter Lazer
Michael.....Walter Brooke
Judy.....Marilyn Siegel
Ann Richards..Geraldine Fitzgerald
Janice.....Dolores Dorn-Heft
Tom Richards.....Barry Morse
Sir Roger Johnson..Basil Rathbone

Sir Roger Johnson..Basil Rathbone
Margo Johnson.....Isobel Elsom
Gregson.....Carl Harbord

Daily Mirror

April 3, 1957

Robert Coleman's THEATRE:

'Hide and Seek' Lays Egg at Barrymore

• Drama proves excellent substitute for hard-to-get sleeping pills.

"Hide and Seek," which Fred F. Finklehoffe, Mark Marvin and Gabriel Katzka installed in the Ethel Barrymore Theatre on Tuesday evening, is a small island of action surrounded by an ocean of words. And the words by Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall are of the "Chin up, old boy" variety.

Whaf the Messrs. Mann and MacDougall have penned is less a play than a tired, dated editorial. Their hearts are in the right place, they're on the side of the angels, but their craftsmanship leaves a lot to be desired. We all know that a world facing the dangers of the atomic age is not the happiest of places.

HOWEVER, this current warning to mankind that it will destroy itself unless it looks out is hardly calculated to stop our heedless voyage into devastation. It hasn't the stature of truly deep thought or the impact of good drama. It takes two verbose acts to reach its obvious destination in the final stanza.

A British scientist seeking to use radiation research to help humanity is sidetracked into employing it to wreak possible havoc. When he wants to quit, he finds that his nation won't let him. For to do so would make him a man without a country, suspect and sans the means to continue idealistic experiments.

When his young son appears to be a victim of his repellent explorations, he tosses a career to the winds. He'll have no more to do with such nefarious undertakings. It doesn't occur to him that the lab men of other countries might be less scrupulous. That fire is often necessary to stop fire.

Director Reginald Denham has staged this conversation piece with an eye toward putting a measure of emotion and suspense into its stiff, pedestrian passages. He has assembled a cast fully able to cope with such demands as the authors make. And Ralph Alswang has designed an attractive rural cottage, with a diminutive but restful garden.

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GERALDINE FITZGERALD, as a mother faced with tragedy, has most of the opportunities for bravura acting and succeeds in setting off a few rather damp fireworks. Basil Rathbone, Barry Morse, Isobel Elsom, Dolores Dorn-Heft, Carl Harbord, Walter Brooke, Peter Lazer and Marilyn Siegel meet their challenges effectively.

The plot of "Hide and Seek" revolves about an egg that is supposed to contain deadly material. Supposed? Heck, it does. As laid on the Barrymore's boards, it proves an excellent substitute for those hard-to-come-by sleeping pills.

Eggs are items which actors and dramatists shun, particularly when they're big ones—like those produced by an ostrich. They are feared, as are hapless theatrical neophytes who whistle in dressing rooms or toss hats on beds. Rightly so, too, as "Hide and Seek" demonstrates.

NEW YORK Herald Tribune

April 3, 1957

THEATER

'Hide and Seek'

By WALTER KERR

I THINK we may say that "Hide and Seek" at the Barrymore, is the first show in history to lay a radioactive egg.

But let's go back. To give you some idea of what authors Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall have hatched, please note that four things are clearly established quite early in the evening:

(a) Tom Richards is a top-secret scientist who has been bombarding hatched eggs with radiation in order to discover the degree of mutilation that will turn up in the monstrous chicks.

(b) His small son, Saul, has a habit of stealing things.

(c) His small son, Saul, has been behaving very peculiarly of late, going into frozen trances and slipping under the water in the bathtub.

(d) Wherever he is, in the bathtub or out of it, Saul carries with him a suspicious small grey box. No one can make him part with it.

One other bit of information is passed on to us at the beginning of the second act. Pay attention now.

(e) The thing in the box is an egg.

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There we have it. At approximately nine-thirty we know all we need to know. But somehow or other the characters don't. They are high-powered intellects, British government-men all. But it isn't until ten-thirty that one of them says "Good God, man!" and begins to suspect that one Saul plus one egg spells trouble.

It seems that most of these fidgety folk have other things on their minds. Mother (Geraldine Fitzgerald) is terribly busy feeling sorry for food. Serving a cheery breakfast of ham and eggs she remarks "Here are the remains of a poor dead pig and a fried hen child." A little later, having burned the toast, she is at it again. "The toast! I've killed it!" she cries. (This may be symbolism and it may be cute domestic comedy; whatever it is, it's blood-curdling). Oh, I almost forgot. She's tender about coffee, too. "There's something sadistic about boiling coffee a second time," she says.

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Sir Roger Johnson, a visiting government supervisor played as well as possible by Basil Rathbone, is preoccupied with magic tricks (his best trick does involve an egg, so I suppose that's plot) and with rather athletic dancing. Give him a really serious problem to get his teeth into and he's grabbing his hostess and plunging recklessly into a waltz that sweeps him right out of the story and into the kitchen.

The rest of the company spend most of two acts talking about their relatives (one of them had an aunt who was blitzed four times and got used to it) and even the overwrought scientist-father is never so upset that he cannot find time, before making a particularly dramatic exit, to comment on his ardent dislike of red toenails. Well, I suppose even scientists have other things to think about.

When we finally do get around to the matter at hand, there are —it must be admitted—one or two mildly interesting images. The spectacle of a small boy lovingly warming an egg that may when hatched, turn out to have neither eyes nor legs is a disturbing one. And when that excellent actress Isobel Elsom gets to play a scene in which she cannot bring herself to touch, or even come near, a forlorn child who may himself be infected, a certain grisly truth flickers faintly through the randomly-written and randomly-staged shenanigans. Peter Lazer, as the boy, does well with a violent attack of hysteria, too.

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But even when "Hide and Seek" is keeping its mind on the egg, it's in trouble. The authors have come to a kind of double conclusion. The sympathetic scientist decides to give up the whole process of research, presumably to save us all. And, on the heels of this decision, we discover that though the boy's egg is all right, there is still a tainted egg missing. As the curtain begins to descend, one actor turns to another and says portentously, "It's somewhere — somebody has got it."

Don't look at me.

New York Post

April 3, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

Drama on the Perils of Radiation

Several eminent British scientists are worried about the effects of atomic radiation in "Hide and Seek," and their concern hardly separates them from sizable sections of less-informed mankind. What is astonishing about their preoccupation with this frightening subject in the new drama by Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall, which opened last night at the Ethel Barrymore Theater, is that all of their ominous talk succeeds only in making it seem almost unbearably tedious.

It shouldn't have worked out in this unfortunate way, either. Not only is the guarded conversation by the learned gentlemen and their alarmed ladies fraught with hints of sinister possibilities, but a couple of slightly enigmatic children are at large in the household, carrying a box which may contain a radioactive egg stolen from the nearby laboratory. Will the purloined egg destroy the lives of the innocent boy and girl? What about the survival chances of their scared parents?

In the third act, when the garrulous but uninformative men of science have ceased their curiously ineffectual shop talk and finally set about the belated business of tracking down and disarming the boy with the egg, things do take on a suggestion of much-needed suspense. There is also an ironic and possibly symbolic ending that is among the few virtues of "Hide and Seek." But this is far too late to salvage a drama in which the dialogue seems almost as deadly as radiation.

According to the earnest dramatists, everything concerned with radiation is lethal, including the home lives of the scientists. Unable to talk to their wives about the dark secrets of their profession, the unhappy savants certainly aren't driven into silence, but what they have to say, even among themselves, is neither illuminating nor dramatic. One wife is restive, the other is beaten into a sort of submissive resignation, and you can't blame the bachelor scientist for clinging to his lonely estate.

Obviously, the authors of "Hide and Seek" are genuinely concerned with the perils of the atomic age and want to tell us some important things about it. But their characters remain stubbornly uninformative to the end, even in the case of the rebellious scientist who is shocked by what he is doing. The scene in which he faces his superior on the matter of his misgivings should have been arresting, but it is just as unhelpful and undramatic as the rest of the play.

The acting clearly isn't at fault. Geraldine Fitzgerald succeeds in being genuinely moving as the bitter wife of the rebel. Isobel Elsom has an effective scene as the wife of the older savant, and Dolores Dorn-Heft is beautiful and striking as a young widow. Basil Rathbone, Barry Morse and Walter Brooke are believable as the scientists, and young Peter Lazar handles credibly the difficult role of the boy with the egg. But "Hide and Seek" turns a dramatic topic into a bore.

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

April 3, 1957

You Can Give Me Winnie the Pooh

By TOM DONNELLY.

"Hide and Seek" (at the Ethel Barrymore) is all about a little English boy who gets hold of a radioactive egg, and upsets his Mummy and Daddy something fierce. That is, it MAY be a radioactive egg, and then again it may be just a plain ordinary hen's egg with nothing inside but a yolk and a white and a lot of vitamins.

You see, Daddy is a nuclear physicist, and one day he takes junior down to the laboratory, and then a few days later word comes that one of those bad eggs is missing, and there is junior playing with an egg. What is Daddy to think? What would you think? Well, you might think that a laboratory where horrible experiments are being performed on unborn chicks under presumably stringent security regulations is no place to take a tot. But if Playwrights Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall had had this thought they couldn't have gone ahead with their play, and then we'd all have been spared a great deal, wouldn't we?

To be perfectly honest, I wouldn't have cared how the little boy got the egg, if only "Hide and Seek" had been just the least bit exciting. But "Hide and Seek" simply isn't top drawer.

Daddy Confused.

Mummy spends most of her time yelling at Daddy for being so absent-minded, and neglecting her, and immersing himself so completely in that tiresome old laboratory that Mummy sometimes wonders if she has a husband at all. Mummy has a lot of provocation, but still she's a bore.

When Daddy and his colleagues get together things do not pick up. Daddy keeps wondering if the ghastly things he does in the lab are really necessary, and his boss says they are, but is unable to express himself very brilliantly. Daddy's best friend announces that he has stumbled on a piece of news: "Science is the new religion."

Daddy's best friend is very very shy, and he has a tender romance with a young widow next door, and it takes him approximately forever to give her a modest kiss. Meanwhile Junior is running around with that egg.

Film-Level.

Toward the end of the play there is a moment of effective Grand Guignol. The adults, all encased in protective helmets and aprons, close in on the terrified and possibly radioactive child. And here, briefly, the plot deepens into genuine drama. The mother throws off her helmet, embraces her sobbing child, and harshly invites the father to step out of his abstract scientific framework and do likewise. All of this is good, but it is not quite enough. Or, as Daddy's best friend might have put it, "One swallow doesn't make a summer."

If characters in plays are going to discuss the really terrifying dilemmas of the modern world, they'd better do it with a trace of fire, style and intelligence. That's MY message. Intellectually, "Hide and Seek" is on the level of those Hollywood films about mad scientists ("You are playing with the dynamite of eternity, Dr. Zombie!") without the small compensating virtues of being frankly lurid and noisily unpretentious.

The acting is, at any rate, in the tradition of the mad scientist films. Geraldine Fitzgerald is Mummy, Barry Morse is Daddy, Basil Rathbone is the man in charge of Britain's radioactivities, and other leading roles are filled by Isobel Elsom, Dolores Dorn-Heft and Peter Lazar.

The New York Times
April 3, 1957

Theatre: 'Hide and Seek'

Mann-MacDougall Play Opens at Barrymore

By BROOKS ATKINSON

IN "Hide and Seek," which opened at the Ethel Barrymore last evening, Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall ask one of the most disturbing questions of the century. Should a nuclear scientist, taking orders from his Government, go on working on projects that will kill or mutilate human beings?

The authors illustrate their argument in the last act. It appears that the scientist's son has got hold of radioactive material that will kill him and contaminate everyone around him. Everybody wants to separate him from the material. On the other hand, nearly everybody wants to remain at a safe distance.

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Especially in the innocent acting of Peter Lazer, as the boy, and of Geraldine Fitzgerald, as the horrified mother, the final act makes very vivid the human values of an ethical question—the human faces that peer through the scientist's logarithms, as the authors phrase it.

But the theatre has one inexorable rule: Even a play on a high-minded theme, written by people who are pure in heart, must have a certain spontaneity and integrity of its own. Mr. MacDougall is the author of "Escapade," which in 1953 portrayed the idealism of some schoolboys who risked their lives to declare their devotion to peace. Mr. Mann is a Canadian poet and dramatist who believes in a decent society and also believes that a writer should deal with basic ideas. "Hide and Seek" is a play with a mission.

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It is also a play with banal ideas about the behavior of characters on the stage, with a lot of small talk that verges on the minuscule, a haphazard way of telling a story and a general air of mechanical contrivance. It has a sewing-circle notion of scientists as men unable to participate in family life or incapable of falling in love romantically. It's a small play on a big subject.

Although Charles Morgan's drama on a similar theme, "The Burning Glass," was no masterpiece, it got more directly to the point than "Hide and Seek."

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Nothing in Reginald Denham's direction rescues the play from dullness. In addition to Miss Fitzgerald, the cast includes Basil Rathbone as a cool, lean leader of scientists, Barry Morse as a scientist with a troubled conscience, Isobel Elsom as a lady with motherly instincts, Walter Brooke as a bachelor scientist who falls in love over a morning cup of coffee, Dolores Dorn-Heft as a widow who may have to settle for a scientist if she wants to marry again, and Marilyn Siegel as her wide-eyed little daughter.

But the performance has a stock-company flavor. Despite the forceful confrontations that make the last act effective, Mr. Mann and Mr. MacDougall have not really communicated the purity and the idealism of their thought.

Journal-American
April 3, 1957

Too Much Fuss About an Egg

By JOHN McCLAIN

THERE WILL BE A TEMPTATION in many quarters to make some sort of fun out of the fact that "Hide And Seek," the new drama which opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre last night, should really have been named "The Egg And I." I got this idea fairly soon after the opening curtain rose, but I made a promise I wouldn't use it on the basis that it was too easy, and then I arrived at the office where this is written, looking out on the Times Building with its moving electric sign, and what do I see? This is what I see: "G.L.F. SAYS EGGS BEST FOOD BUY . . . TASTY EGGS . . . EGGS FOR PEP . . . EGGS FOR VARIETY . . . FIX EGGS 100 WAYS . . ."

I don't know who G.L.F. is, but having just come from the theatre where one egg had kept us in our seats for over two hours it seemed bigger than all of us, and I had to go back on my word.

For this play by Stanley Mann and Roger MacDougall is almost solely concerned with a group of dedicated British nuclear scientists and the foment caused when a small boy has apparently run off with an experimental egg whose radiation will kill everybody.

This is not, of course, a conventional egg, but rather a weapon that these savants have created to direct the course of mankind. This leads to endless discussion of why such effort should have been diverted to less peaceable ends, threatens to disrupt a couple of amiable households, and rather refutes the G.L.F. claims that eggs are "Best Food Buy." Finally everybody is attired in space suits and helmets and nobody will get within 10 yards of the kid. Could give a lad a lasting complex.

A Ludicrous Idea

It seemed to me a ludicrous idea to begin with, and one which didn't build and capture me as the evening progressed. There is something innocuous about an egg, and it seemed difficult to share the horrors of these adults, as they crashed around the stage looking for the sprout in masks and leaden draperies. I'm quite sure that my breakfast may blow up tomorrow and wreck the entire middle of Manhattan, but until it happens I would prefer to lop the top off my three-minuter with complete confidence.

There are good people in the cast and the production. Geraldine Fitzgerald plays the wife of a recalcitrant scientist with extreme enthusiasm and a proper respect for the enlightenment of a new world; Basil Rathbone is suave and compelling as the senior researcher; Isobel Elsom is his loyal and, apparently, unquestioning wife; other able assists are offered by Barry Morse, Dolores Dorn-Heft, Carl Harbord, Peter Lazer (another very capable child actor), Marilyn Siegel and Walter Brooke.

Strong Staging

Reginald Denham has staged the proceedings with a strong and inventive hand, and Ralph Alswang has produced a set pleasantly reminiscent of a British country house and grounds.

But the authors have not produced a play that holds us. Here an egg has laid a bomb, if that's possible.

"Brigadoon"

Editor's Note: "Brigadoon" was revived at City Center on March 27th as part of the New York City Center Light Opera Season. On April 9th, it was moved to the Adelphi Theatre. The following reviews are of the City Center revival.

New York Post

March 28, 1957

By Richard Watts Jr.

Excellent Revival of 'Brigadoon'

"Brigadoon" is one of the most charming of musical plays, which is about as uncontroversial a statement as a drama reviewer ever made. It is particularly well done, too, in the new revival, which opened last night at the City Center, and represents an especially satisfying production job by that illustrious civic minded organization. Admirably sung and pleasantly acted, the earlier achievement by the gentlemen responsible for "My Fair Lady" is still entirely worthy of them.

I had forgotten, for one thing, what a delightful score Frederick Loewe composed for his and Alan Jay Lerner's fantasy about the Scottish village that returns to life for one day each century. I did remember that the music was attractive and there was a lovely song called "Come to Me, Bend to Me," but it came to me as almost a revelation last night that "Brigadoon" was filled with enchanting melodies, including "Almost Like Being in Love" and "I'll Go Home With Bonnie Jean."

The dancing, as I don't find invariably true in musical plays, is high among the joys of "Brigadoon." It is beautifully and dramatically integrated with the narrative, and, in Agnes de Mille's best manner, is staged vividly and colorfully. Furthermore, it is generally aided by the presence in the cast of two exceptional dancers named Matt Mattox and Lidija Franklin. As the tormented and unsuccessful lover of the coheroine, Mr. Mattox is particularly striking and successful.

There are many virtues in the songs, the dances and the gracefully romantic narrative, but what makes "Brigadoon" so good and gives it its distinctive quality is that all of its elements are so effectively fused. Its slightly eerie sentimental mood is captured at the start, and happily without too much emphasis on that dangerous aspect of sentimentality, and is carried through with taste and intelligence. Even the schoolmaster's little lecture on faith is managed without excess.

Another remarkable accomplishment is that the comedy, a desperately perilous element in the midst of romantic fantasy, turns out to be so pleasant and, of all things, amusing. This is in considerable part due to Mr. Lerner's text but it is also a tribute to the engagingly unostentatious playing of Scott McKay and Helen Gallagher. Mr. McKay, as the hero's skeptical friend, and Miss Gallagher, as the village soubrette, contribute eminently to the evening's success.

The revival is notably well sung. David Atkinson, as the romantic visitor from America, and Robert Rounseville, as the Scottish bridegroom, have excellent voices, and so has Virginia Oswald, as the heroine. And their acting is in the proper mood, as is that of Virginia Bosler as the village bride. "Brigadoon" has long had an important place among the distinguished works of the popular American musical theater, and the City Center revival shows that it hasn't been overrated.

"BRIGADOON"

Revival of the musical in two acts and eleven scenes, book and lyrics by Alan Jay Lerner, music by Frederick Loewe; staged by George H. Englund; dances by Agnes de Mille and re-staged by James Jamieson; setting by Oliver Smith; costumes by Paul duPont; lighting by Peggy Clark; presented by the New York City Center Light Opera Company at N. Y. City Center, March 27, 1957. The cast:

Tommy Albright...David Atkinson
Jeff Douglas.....Scott McKay
Archie Beaton....Elliott Sullivan
Harry Beaton.....Matt Mattox
Angus MacGuffie....Guy Gordon
Sandy Dean.....John Dorrin
Andrew MacLaren..Russell Gaige
Fiona MacLaren..Virginia Oswald
Jean MacLaren..Virginia Bosler
Meg Brockie...Helen Gallagher
Charlie Daltymple.....
Robert Rounseville
Maggie Anderson..Lidija Franklin
Mr. Lundie.....John C. Becher
Frank.....Jack Emrek
Jane Ashton.....Sloan Simpson
Bagpiper.....Duncan MacGaskill

New York World-Telegram and The Sun

March 28, 1957

Miss de Mille Is Still the Champ

By TOM DONNELLY.

The new edition of "Brigadoon" at the City Center is definitely a bargain, and the heroine of the evening is Agnes de Mille.

Other post-"Oklahoma!" musicals may contain individual dance passages more brilliant than any of those in "Brigadoon," but there's not a one of them that can touch this show for consistent beauty of design.

I don't mean to slight the contributions of Alan Jay Lerner (book and lyrics) and Frederick Loewe (music). The story of a Scottish village that comes to life for one day every hundred years remains in its essentials fresh and charming—despite the inclusion of a few Broadway gimcracks—and the songs ("Heather on the Hill," "Almost Like Being in Love," "Come to Me, Bend to Me," etc.), are most attractive.

The Real Glory.

Still, the real glory of "Brigadoon" is its choreography. It is a constant factor, gilding scene after scene with tenderness and grace and, when the occasion demands it, with melodramatic excitement. When the dancers are in motion, the painted scenery fades away, and the light on the stage becomes the sun on the heather, and there is a wind rippling through the theater that is not the result of ingenious machinery. Miss de Mille has conjured up the gaiety of country fairs, the delicacy of gentle courtship, and, in the sword dance, an athletic splendor.

These are strong, lush terms, but they are not excessive or sentimental. They are a just tribute to Miss de Mille's dazzling achievement.

Some of the artists engaged in "Brigadoon" are not ideal, from a pictorial point of view, and by this I mean simply that one or two figures of romance are not as romantic as they might be. But all of the soloists sing nicely, with the exception of Robert Rounseville, who sings superbly. David Atkinson is the hero; Virginia Oswald, the principal heroine, and Scott McKay, the hero's best friend, who is burdened with some not precisely killingly humorous remarks. Pleasant people, all of them.

More of Them.

Virginia Bosler is the dancing heroine; Matt Mattox, the dancing villain, and a wonderfully handsome young lady named Lidija Franklin is also prominently involved in the more dynamic aspects of this highly choreographic enterprise. An admirable threesome they are.

Even the more restrained and tasteful musical plays invariably contain a man-crazy comedienne, and Helen Gallagher fills the bill with all the steam and vivacity that could reasonably be demanded.

Considering that they don't have all the time in the world to polish their shows at the City Center, this "Brigadoon" is something of a triumph.

The New York Times

March 28, 1957

Theatre: 'Brigadoon'

By BROOKS ATKINSON

PITY that "Brigadoon" cannot settle down to an extended run. According to the table of organization of the City Center, where it opened last evening, the present engagement must come to an end on April 7.

But it deserves to remain on view if only to remind us that the tune-smiths and libretto-joiners of this season have been imposing on the theatre's good nature. Ten years ago "Brigadoon" introduced Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe to New York as people of particular talent.

At present they are on top of the heap, thanks in large part to Bernard Shaw, as author and composer of "My Fair Lady." But "Brigadoon" was a memorable prelude. And, as a matter of fact, their second show, "Paint Your Wagon," deserved a longer hearing in New York than it had.

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In revival, "Brigadoon" is as enchanting as it was originally. The story of the Scottish town that lives only one day in a century turns out to be a pleasant invitation to romance. But if the play were written superficially and if the music were juke-box stuff, the plot might be unbearable. In point of fact, the plot works beautifully. Mr. Lerner has organized the story. He does not get down to the details of the fairy-story until the audience has already been won by the pleasant characters, the exuberant music and the prim though fiery dances. After that the incantation is complete and easy.

Although "Brigadoon" is an enormous and complicated show, the industrious City Center has mounted it admirably. George H. Englund has staged it with spontaneity and grace. Oliver Smith's expansive settings of an old Scottish village are glorious, and Paul duPont's costumes, with their kilts, tartans and varicolored dresses, are decorative. And Peggy Clark has evoked the friendliness and the sorcery of the story in her meticulous lighting.

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Nor has the City Center been irresponsible about the music. It is played with color and conviction by an excellent orchestra of thirty-two instrumentalists, conducted with obvious authority by Julius Rudel. Fortunately, Robert Rounseville is on hand to sing Mr. Loewe's daintiest madrigal, "Come to Me, Bend to Me." Mr. Rounseville, who has a trained voice, sings it beguilingly, and acts the part, too.

The cast is uniformly excellent. Virginia Oswald and Virginia Bosler in the two leading parts for women; David Atkinson and Scott McKay as the two intruders on a quaint village; Helen Gallagher as the comic man-hunter—act and sing with skill and enthusiasm.

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The ballets originally composed by Agnes de Mille were an integral part of the first "Brigadoon." James Jamieson has restaged them well. They have a pride that gives distinction to the whole production; and in the person of Matt Mattox they have a first-rate interpreter. The village dance has a sweetness that is tempered by the severity of the Scottish style. And the sword dance is remarkable for the controlled ferocity of Mr. Mattox' expression.

Mr. Lerner and Mr. Loewe are authors of the two finest musical plays on Broadway at the moment. For taste, imagination and style they have no present competitors. "Brigadoon" deserves a longer run than the City Center is able to provide just now. It is a memorable show.

New York Herald Tribune

March 28, 1957

THEATER

'Brigadoon'

By WALTER KERR

IF THE lost and slightly cynical worldlings who stumble into the vanishing town of "Brigadoon" find its sweet, sleepy ways alluring enough to make them want to stay, there are sound reasons for their enchantment. The idyll that Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe and Agnes de Mille once concocted is quite possibly the simplest smash hit ever to stray onto Broadway.

There is nothing in it more striking than, say, the reserved, demure gesture with which the Scots lassie who has just danced "Come to Me, Bend to Me" turns away from her bridesmaids, draws a matronly shawl about her face, and sits silently, patiently and expectantly on the trunk she has packed toward her future. The rhythms of Miss de Mille's dance have been shy, resigned and questioning; they end in a whisper.

Throughout this fairy-tale account of a winsome and wistful people who wake only once every hundred years, the various authors have staked everything not on the flash and flare of standard musical comedy but on an innocent conviction that what they are doing is believable enough to be done straightforwardly. Rarely does an actor get an exit line that hurtles us over into the next scene; rarely does an orchestration clatter and bang to an "applause" finish.

Instead, librettist Lerner has insisted on a wry and quizzical humor that draws light fun out of casual conversation. If Scott McKay can lean lazily against one of those hillside tree stumps and remark that most of his friends who have inferiority complexes are quite right to have them—and then get a resounding laugh with the line—it is because no hysterical pressure has been applied to a rambling, thoughtful, engaging book. The result is that the book hasn't dated; in its City Center revival it seems as gently amiable, and as unindebted to the gage-files, as ever.

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Frederick Loewe's melodies survive the jukeboxes, too—largely because they weren't geared to the jukeboxes in the first place. This is the venture in which a composer decided that he could follow the mellow yearning of "Waitin' for My Dearie" with a lilting folk-tune called "I'll Go Home With Bonnie Jean" and then go right on into the dawdling grace of "The Heather on the Hill" without apologies to the brass section in the pit. As Virginia Oswald, Robert Rounseville and David Atkinson continue to sing them, these salutes to a lost innocence still sound morning-fresh.

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Miss de Mille's dances were always a triumphant part of the show's thoroughly honest charm. In the restaging by James Jamieson they have—as was to be expected—lost something. Inspired gestures tend to soften into conventional outlines; wonderfully tilted shoulders don't dip as deeply as they did; those dazzling, sudden impulses that lighted the stage don't glow as warmly.

But just to watch a townful of girls slide softly and breathlessly into the first few bars of "Bonnie Jean" is enough to remind you of the feather-light original, and to make you wish that this kind of dancing hadn't virtually disappeared from the musical comedy stage.

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For the evening's few more robust excursions into standard excitement City Center has provided Helen Gallagher to sing and grimace the hoyden alarums of a man-eating minx; Miss Gallagher, gloating in the gloaming, is fine. And dancer Matt Mattox is on hand to give grace and stature to the now-familiar 'Sword Dance' and to hurl himself from Oliver Smith's gnarled trees in the second-act chase through a highland forest. (This dance, in passing, has suffered more than most; but the ensemble, rather than Mr. Mattox, is at fault).

Reservations aside, "Brigadoon" continues to thrive on its easygoing, unfrenzied, quite genuine charm.

Journal-American
March 28, 1957

Revival's Fine At City Center

By JOHN McCLAIN

"BRIGADOON," the haunting Scottish musical that launched the "Fair Lady" team of Alan Lerner and Frederick Loewe, was given a rousing revival by the City Center Light Opera Company at their theatre last night.

Miss Jean Dalrymple, the director, has assembled a brilliant cast, headed by Robert Rounseville (who plays the role of Dalrymple), and featuring such veterans as Helen Gallagher, Scott McKay, David Atkinson and Virginia Oswald.

I rather imagine the original scenery was pressed into service, but in any case it looks great and works smoothly, the costumes are bright and beguiling, and the entire proceedings reveal almost no ravages of time. It is a delightful evening, and the price is right.

Pure Fantasy

As you recall, this tale of the Highlands is pure fantasy and hence is more apt to beat the clock in revival than the more topical musicals of yesteryear. A couple of Americans are lost in the Scottish countryside, but finally blunder into the town of Brigadoon, which is not included on any map.

A mystery shrouds the place which is finally explained by the fact that a miracle occured there a couple hundred years ago: each night, when the town goes to sleep a century goes by, and so in the course of two nights they have been transported from the 18th Century to the present.

This, as always, is slightly bewildering — but it is nothing to pause and worry over, especially since the pace of the festivities allows little time for thought. The gimmick is that nobody can leave the town or the miracle will be canceled and the whole community will disappear. And, naturally, one of the Americans has fallen in love with a lassie. You can take it from there.

Memorable Dance

The choreography and general style of the piece are of course, indigenous to the Scottish background, and there is no end of flings, kilts and bagpipes, all skillfully presented by Agnes de Mille. There is a memorable funeral dance by Lidija Franklin and several beautifully staged, probably authentic, production numbers involving the whole cast.

With Rounseville and Atkinson, and Miss Oswald, the distinguished Lerner-Loewe score is capably entrusted. Several numbers, especially "Almost Like Being in Love," sung by Atkinson and Miss Oswald, produced almost endless applause and whistles.

Sloan Simpson, making her debut on Broadway, emerges as a most decorative and assured performer in the role of the girl the hero left, and again leaves at home. Other notable contributions are offered by Matt Mattox, Virginia Bosler and John C. Becher.

The City Center's Spring Season got off to a rather glum start with "The Beggar's Opera," their first offering, but here they are back on the beam. "Brigadoon" is just fine.

DAILY NEWS
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'Brigadoon,' by Loewe & Lerner, Is Given an Enchanting Revival

BY JOHN CHAPMAN

The two best musicals in New York were written by the same men: Frederick (Fritz) Loewe, the composer, and Alan Jay Lerner, the librettist and lyricist. One, "My Fair Lady," opened March 14 a year ago and will run for several more years. The other, "Brigadoon," which was originally presented by Cheryl Crawford March 13 ten years ago, was revived at the City Center last evening and will run for only two weeks unless something miraculous is done on its behalf.

This "Brigadoon" revival is something very special in our theatre. It is at least as good as the original production, which took much more money and much more time to put together. It is an offering in the musical theatre which, to put it quickly, clicks.

The story is a sweet one—a fantasy about two young Americans on a tour of Scotland who find themselves in a town called Brigadoon which hasn't existed for 200 years. This town and all its people are biding their time in a truly Scottish fashion by coming to life for only one day in each century.

Splendid Company

The Yanks strike Brigadoon on one of these days two centuries ago, and of course one of them has to fall in love with a girl. The story is not unlike an earlier one, John L. Balderston's romantic whimsey, "Berkeley Square"—but this one has been made for song and dance.

Last evening the City Center was filled with song and dance as a splendid company simply fell into "Brigadoon" and performed it as though they had been doing it all their lives. Such a happy combination of all the good element of the musical theatre does not come about very often in a new show, and much less often in a revival.

The credit for "Brigadoon" must go to everybody. To Lerner, of course, for a fine romantic fable. To Loewe for some of the most beguiling melodies to be heard anywhere. To Agnes de Mille for the dance patterns she originally wove into the story, and to James Jamieson and his company of dancers for having restaged them so beautifully.

It Comes Alive

Credit too, of course, to Jean Dalrymple, director of the New York City Light Opera Company, for having chosen "Brigadoon" as the opening attraction of her spring season. And a great amount of credit—perhaps the most—to Julius Rudel for his orchestrations and his conducting of a splendid orchestra.

And, not least, my thanks to an exceptional company. With David Atkinson and Scott McKay playing the two enchanted tourists, and Virginia Oswald as an appealing Brigadoon lass, and Robert Rounseville as a fine tenor, and Helen Gallagher as a pert and sassy Brigadoonian, one can be in no more attractive company.

And the songs, like the village of Brigadoon, have come alive again—"Come to Me, Bend to Me," "Almost Like Being in Love" and many other numbers—and comprise a score which is the equal of "My Fair Lady."

Well, it's only here for two weeks, because several inferior musicals have the Broadway theatres filled and the City Center must move "Brigadoon" out for its second production. This is a pity.